

retirement plan is “Individual Retirement Account of John Q. Smith,” and the name of the trustee is “ABC Bank,” the payee line of a check would read “ABC Bank as trustee of Individual Retirement Account of John Q. Smith.” Unless the name of the distributee is included in the name of the eligible retirement plan, the check also must indicate that it is for the benefit of the distributee. If the eligible retirement plan is not an individual retirement account or an individual retirement annuity, the payee line of the check need not identify the trustee by name. For example, the payee line of a check for the benefit of distributee Jane Doe might read, “Trustee of XYZ Corporation Savings Plan FBO Jane Doe.”

Q-5: Is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover currently includible in gross income or subject to 20-percent withholding?

A-5: No. An eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover is not currently includible in the distributee’s gross income under section 402(c) and is exempt from the 20-percent withholding imposed under section 3405(c)(2). However, when any portion of the eligible rollover distribution is subsequently distributed from the eligible retirement plan, that portion will be includible in gross income to the extent required under section 402, 403, or 408.

Q-6: What procedures may a plan administrator prescribe for electing a direct rollover, and what information may the plan administrator require a distributee to provide when electing a direct rollover?

A-6: (a) *Permissible procedures.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this Q&A-6, the plan administrator may prescribe any procedure for a distributee to elect a direct rollover under section 401(a)(31), provided that the procedure is reasonable. The procedure may include any reasonable requirement for information or documentation from the distributee in addition to the items of adequate information specified in § 1.3405(c)-1(b), Q&A-7 of this chapter. For example, it would be reasonable for the plan administrator

to require that the distributee provide a statement from the designated recipient plan that the plan will accept the direct rollover for the benefit of the distributee and that the recipient plan is, or is intended to be, an individual retirement account, an individual retirement annuity, a qualified annuity plan described in section 403(a), or a qualified trust described in section 401(a), as applicable. In the case of a designated recipient plan that is a qualified trust, it also would be reasonable for the plan administrator to require a statement that the qualified trust is not excepted from the definition of an eligible retirement plan by section 401(a)(31)(D) (i.e., is not a defined benefit plan).

(b) *Impermissible procedures.* A plan will fail to satisfy section 401(a)(31) if the plan administrator prescribes any unreasonable procedure, or requires information or documentation, that effectively eliminates or substantially impairs the distributee’s ability to elect a direct rollover. For example, it would effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee’s ability to elect a direct rollover if the recipient plan required the distributee to obtain an opinion of counsel stating that the eligible retirement plan receiving the rollover is a qualified plan or individual retirement account. Similarly, it would effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee’s ability to elect a direct rollover if the distributing plan required a letter from the recipient eligible retirement plan stating that, upon request by the distributing plan, the recipient plan will automatically return any direct rollover amount that the distributing plan advises the recipient plan was paid incorrectly. It would also effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee’s ability to elect a direct rollover if the distributing plan required, as a condition for making a direct rollover, a letter from the recipient eligible retirement plan indemnifying the distributing plan for any liability arising from the distribution.

Q-7: May the plan administrator treat a distributee as having made an election under a default procedure

where the distributee does not affirmatively elect to make or not make a direct rollover within a certain time period?

A-7: Yes, the plan administrator may establish a default procedure whereby any distributee who fails to make an affirmative election is treated as having either made or not made a direct rollover election. However, the plan administrator may not make a distribution under any default procedure unless the distributee has received an explanation of the default procedure and an explanation of the direct rollover option as required under section 402(f) and §1.402(f)-1, Q&A-1 and unless the timing requirements described in §1.402(f)-1, Q&A-2 and Q&A-3 have been satisfied with respect to the explanations of both the default procedure and the direct rollover option.

Q-8: May the plan administrator establish a deadline after which the distributee may not revoke an election to make or not make a direct rollover?

A-8: Yes, but the plan administrator is not permitted to prescribe any deadline or time period with respect to revocation of a direct rollover election that is more restrictive for the distributee than that which otherwise applies under the plan to revocation of the form of distribution elected by the distributee.

Q-9: Must the plan administrator permit a distributee to elect to have a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover and to have the remainder of that distribution paid to the distributee?

A-9: Yes, the plan administrator must permit a distributee to elect to have a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover and to have the remainder paid to the distributee. However, the plan administrator is permitted to require that, if the distributee elects to have only a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover, that portion be equal to at least a specified minimum amount, provided the specified minimum amount is less than or equal to \$500 or any greater amount as prescribed by the Commissioner in rev-

enue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin. See §601.601(d)(2)(ii)(b) of this chapter. If the entire amount of the eligible rollover distribution is less than or equal to the specified minimum amount, the plan administrator need not allow the distributee to divide the distribution.

Q-10: Must the plan administrator allow a distributee to divide an eligible rollover distribution into two or more separate distributions to be paid in direct rollovers to two or more eligible retirement plans?

A-10: No. The plan administrator is not required (but is permitted) to allow the distributee to divide an eligible rollover distribution into separate distributions to be paid to two or more eligible retirement plans in direct rollovers. Thus, the plan administrator may require that the distributee select a single eligible retirement plan to which the eligible rollover distribution (or portion thereof) will be distributed in a direct rollover.

Q-11: Will a plan satisfy section 401(a)(31) if the plan administrator does not permit a distributee to elect a direct rollover if his or her eligible rollover distributions during a year are reasonably expected to total less than \$200?

A-11: Yes. A plan will satisfy section 401(a)(31) even though the plan administrator does not permit any distributee to elect a direct rollover with respect to eligible rollover distributions during a year that are reasonably expected to total less than \$200 or any lower minimum amount specified by the plan administrator. The rules described in §31.3405(c)-1, Q&A-14 of this chapter (relating to whether withholding under section 3405(c) is required for an eligible rollover distribution that is less than \$200) also apply for purposes of determining whether a direct rollover election under section 401(a)(31) must be provided for an eligible rollover distribution that is less than \$200 or the lower specified amount.

Q-12: Is a plan administrator permitted to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series

of periodic payments as applying to all subsequent payments in the series?

A-12: (a) Yes. A plan administrator is permitted to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series of periodic payments as applying to all subsequent payments in the series, provided that:

(1) The employee is permitted at any time to change, with respect to subsequent payments, a previous election to make or not make a direct rollover; and

(2) The written explanation provided under section 402(f) explains that the election to make or not make a direct rollover will apply to all future payments unless the employee subsequently changes the election.

(b) See § 1.402(f)-1, Q&A-3 for further guidance concerning the rules for providing section 402(f) notices when eligible rollover distributions are made in a series of periodic payments.

Q-13: Is the eligible retirement plan designated by a distributee to receive a direct rollover distribution required to accept the distribution?

A-13: No. Although section 401(a)(31) requires qualified plans to provide distributees the option to make a direct rollover of their eligible rollover distributions to an eligible retirement plan, it imposes no requirement that any eligible retirement plan accept rollovers. Thus, a plan can refuse to accept rollovers. Alternatively, a plan can limit the circumstances under which it will accept rollovers. For example, a plan can limit the types of plans from which it will accept a rollover or limit the types of assets it will accept in a rollover (such as accepting only cash or its equivalent).

Q-14: If a plan accepts an invalid rollover contribution, whether or not as a direct rollover, how will the contribution be treated for purposes of applying the qualification requirements of section 401(a) or 403(a) to the plan?

A-14: (a) *Acceptance of invalid rollover contribution.* If a plan accepts an invalid rollover contribution, the contribution will be treated, for purposes of applying the qualification requirements of section 401(a) or 403(a) to the receiving plan, as if it were a valid rollover contribution, if the following two

conditions are satisfied. First, when accepting the amount from the employee as a rollover contribution, the plan administrator of the receiving plan reasonably concludes that the contribution is a valid rollover contribution. While evidence that the distributing plan is the subject of a determination letter from the Commissioner indicating that the distributing plan is qualified would be useful to the receiving plan administrator in reasonably concluding that the contribution is a valid rollover contribution, it is not necessary for the distributing plan to have such a determination letter in order for the receiving plan administrator to reach that conclusion. Second, if the plan administrator of the receiving plan later determines that the contribution was an invalid rollover contribution, the amount of the invalid rollover contribution, plus any earnings attributable thereto, is distributed to the employee within a reasonable time after such determination.

(b) *Definitions.* For purposes of this Q&A-14:

(1) An *invalid rollover contribution* is an amount that is accepted by a plan as a rollover within the meaning of § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-1 (or as a rollover contribution within the meaning of section 408(d)(3)(A)(ii)) but that is not an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified plan (or an amount described in section 408(d)(3)(A)(ii)) or that does not satisfy the other requirements of section 401(a)(31), 402(c), or 408(d)(3) for treatment as a rollover or a rollover contribution.

(2) A *valid rollover contribution* is a contribution that is accepted by a plan as a rollover within the meaning of § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-1 or as a rollover contribution within the meaning of section 408(d)(3) and that satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(31), 402(c), or 408(d)(3) for treatment as a rollover or a rollover contribution.

(c) *Examples.* The provisions of paragraph (a) of this Q&A-14 are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. (i) Employer X maintains for its employees Plan M, a profit sharing plan qualified under section 401(a). Plan M provides that any employee of Employer X may make a rollover contribution to Plan M. Employee A is an employee of Employer X, will

not have attained age 70½ by the end of the year, and has a vested account balance in Plan O (a plan maintained by Employee A's prior employer). Employee A elects a single sum distribution from Plan O and elects that it be paid to Plan M in a direct rollover.

(ii) Employee A provides the plan administrator of Plan M with a letter from the plan administrator of Plan O stating that Plan O has received a determination letter from the Commissioner indicating that Plan O is qualified.

(iii) Based upon such a letter, absent facts to the contrary, a plan administrator may reasonably conclude that Plan O is qualified and that the amount paid as a direct rollover is an eligible rollover distribution.

Example 2. (i) The facts are the same as *Example 1*, except that, instead of the letter provided in paragraph (ii) of *Example 1*, Employee A provides the plan administrator of Plan M with a letter from the plan administrator of Plan O representing that Plan O satisfies the requirements of section 401(a) (or representing that Plan O is intended to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) and that the administrator of Plan O is not aware of any Plan O provision or operation that would result in the disqualification of Plan O).

(ii) Based upon such a letter, absent facts to the contrary, a plan administrator may reasonably conclude that Plan O is qualified and that the amount paid as a direct rollover is an eligible rollover distribution.

Example 3. (i) Same facts as *Example 1*, except that Employee A elects to receive the distribution from Plan O and wishes to make a rollover contribution described in section 402 rather than a direct rollover.

(ii) When making the rollover contribution, Employee A certifies that, to the best of Employee A's knowledge, Employee A is entitled to the distribution as an employee and not as a beneficiary, the distribution from Plan O to be contributed to Plan M is not one of a series of periodic payments, the distribution from Plan O was received by Employee A not more than 60 days before the date of the rollover contribution, and the entire amount of the rollover contribution would be includible in gross income if it were not being rolled over.

(iii) As support for these certifications, Employee A provides the plan administrator of Plan M with two statements from Plan O. The first is a letter from the plan administrator of Plan O, as described in *Example 1*, stating that Plan O has received a determination letter from the Commissioner indicating that Plan O is qualified. The second is the distribution statement that accompanied the distribution check. The distribution statement indicates that the distribution is being made by Plan O to Employee A, indicates the gross amount of the distribution, and indicates the amount withheld as Fed-

eral income tax. The amount withheld as Federal income tax is 20 percent of the gross amount of the distribution. Employee A contributes to Plan M an amount not greater than the gross amount of the distribution stated in the letter from Plan O and the contribution is made within 60 days of the date of the distribution statement from Plan O.

(iv) Based on the certifications and documentation provided by Employee A, absent facts to the contrary, a plan administrator may reasonably conclude that Plan O is qualified and that the distribution otherwise satisfies the requirements of section 402(c) for treatment as a rollover contribution.

Example 4. (i) The facts are the same as in *Example 3*, except that, rather than contributing the distribution from Plan O to Plan M, Employee A contributes the distribution from Plan O to IRA P, an individual retirement account described in section 408(a). After the contribution of the distribution from Plan O to IRA P, but before the year in which Employee A attains age 70½, Employee A requests a distribution from IRA P and decides to contribute it to Plan M as a rollover contribution. To make the rollover contribution, Employee A endorses the check received from IRA P as payable to Plan M.

(ii) In addition to providing the certifications described in *Example 3* with respect to the distribution from Plan O, Employee A certifies that, to the best of Employee A's knowledge, the contribution to IRA P was not made more than 60 days after the date Employee A received the distribution from Plan O, no amount other than the distribution from Plan O has been contributed to IRA P, and the distribution from IRA P was received not more than 60 days earlier than the rollover contribution to Plan M.

(iii) As support for these certifications, in addition to the two statements from Plan O described in *Example 3*, Employee A provides copies of statements from IRA P. The statements indicate that the account is identified as an IRA, the account was established within 60 days of the date of the letter from Plan O informing Employee A that an amount had been distributed, and the opening balance in the IRA does not exceed the amount of the distribution described in the letter from Plan O. There is no indication in the statements that any additional contributions have been made to IRA P since the account was opened. The date on the check from IRA P is less than 60 days before the date that Employee A makes the contribution to Plan M.

(iv) Based on the certifications and documentation provided by Employee A, absent facts to the contrary, a plan administrator may reasonably conclude that Plan O is qualified and that the contribution by Employee A is a rollover contribution described in section 408(d)(3)(A)(ii) that satisfies the

other requirements of section 408(d)(3) for treatment as a rollover contribution.

Q-15: For purposes of applying the plan qualification requirements of section 401(a), is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover a distribution and rollover or is it a transfer of assets and liabilities?

A-15: For purposes of applying the plan qualification requirements of section 401(a), a direct rollover is a distribution and rollover of the eligible rollover distribution and not a transfer of assets and liabilities. For example, if the consent requirements under section 411(a)(11) or sections 401(a)(11) and 417(a)(2) apply to the distribution, they must be satisfied before the eligible rollover distribution may be distributed in a direct rollover. Similarly, the direct rollover is not a transfer of assets and liabilities that must satisfy the requirements of section 414(l). Finally, a direct rollover is not a transfer of benefits for purposes of applying the requirements under section 411(d)(6), as described in § 1.411(d)-4, Q&A-3. Therefore, for example, the eligible retirement plan is not required to provide, with respect to amounts paid to it in a direct rollover, the same optional forms of benefits that were provided under the plan that made the direct rollover. The direct rollover requirements of section 401(a)(31) do not affect the ability of a qualified plan to make an elective or nonelective transfer of assets and liabilities to another qualified plan in accordance with applicable law (such as section 414(l)).

Q-16: Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution that is in the form of a plan loan offset amount?

A-16: A plan will not fail to satisfy section 401(a)(31) merely because the plan does not permit a distributee to elect a direct rollover of an eligible rollover distribution in the form of a plan loan offset amount. Section 1.402(c)-2(b), Q&A-9 defines a plan loan offset amount, in general, as a distribution that occurs when, under the terms governing a plan loan, the participant's accrued benefit is reduced (offset) in order to repay the loan. A plan administrator is permitted to allow a direct rollover of a participant note for a plan

loan to a qualified trust described in section 401(a) or a qualified annuity plan described in section 403(a). See § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-9 for examples illustrating the rules for plan loan offset amounts that are set forth in this Q&A-16. See § 31.3405(c)-1, Q&A-11 of this chapter for guidance concerning special withholding rules that apply to a distribution in the form of a plan loan offset amount.

Q-17: Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified plan distributed annuity contract?

A-17: Yes. If any amount to be distributed under a qualified plan distributed annuity contract is an eligible rollover distribution (in accordance with § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-10 the annuity contract must satisfy section 401(a)(31) in the same manner as a qualified plan under section 401(a). Section 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-10 defines a qualified plan distributed annuity contract as an annuity contract purchased for a participant, and distributed to the participant, by a qualified plan. In the case of a qualified plan distributed annuity contract, the payor under the contract is treated as the plan administrator. See § 31.3405(c)-1, Q&A-13 of this chapter concerning the application of mandatory 20-percent withholding requirements to distributions from a qualified plan distributed annuity contract.

Q-18: What assumptions may a plan administrator make regarding whether a benefit is an eligible rollover distribution?

A-18: (a) *General rule.* For purposes of section 401(a)(31), a plan administrator may make the assumptions described in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this Q&A-18 in determining the amount of a distribution that is an eligible rollover distribution for which a direct rollover option must be provided. Section 31.3405(c)-1, Q&A-10 of this chapter provides assumptions for purposes of complying with section 3405(c). See § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-15 concerning the effect of these assumptions for purposes of section 402(c).

(b) *\$5,000 death benefit.* A plan administrator is permitted to assume that a distribution from the plan that qualifies for the \$5,000 death benefit exclusion under section 101(b) is the only

death benefit being paid with respect to a deceased employee that qualifies for that exclusion. Thus, to the extent that such a distribution would be excludible from gross income based on this assumption, the plan administrator is permitted to assume that it is not an eligible rollover distribution.

(c) *Determination of designated beneficiary.* For the purpose of determining the amount of the minimum distribution required to satisfy section 401(a)(9)(A) for any calendar year, the plan administrator is permitted to assume that there is no designated beneficiary.

Q-19: When must a qualified plan be amended to comply with section 401(a)(31)?

A-19: Even though section 401(a)(31) applies to distributions from qualified plans made on or after January 1, 1993, a qualified plan is not required to be amended before the last day by which amendments must be made to comply with the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and related provisions, as permitted in other administrative guidance of general applicability, provided that:

(a) In the interim period between January 1, 1993, and the date on which the plan is amended, the plan is operated in accordance with the requirements of section 401(a)(31); and

(b) The amendment applies retroactively to January 1, 1993.

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§ 1.401(b)-1 Certain retroactive changes in plan.

(a) *General rule.* Under section 401(b) a stock bonus, pension, profit-sharing, annuity, or bond purchase plan which does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) on any day solely as a result of a disqualifying provision (as defined in paragraph (b) of this section) shall be considered to have satisfied such requirements on such date if, on or before the last day of the remedial amendment period (as determined under paragraphs (d), (e) and (f) of this section) with respect to such disqualifying provision, all provisions of the plan which are necessary to satisfy all requirements of sections 401(a), 403(a), or 405(a) are in effect and have been

made effective for all purposes for the whole of such period. Under some facts and circumstances, it may not be possible to amend a plan retroactively so that all provisions of the plan which are necessary to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) are in fact made effective for the whole remedial amendment period. If it is not possible, the requirements of this section will not be satisfied even if the employer adopts a retroactive plan amendment which, in form, appears to satisfy such requirements. Section 401(b) does not permit a plan to be made retroactively effective, for qualification purposes, for a taxable year prior to the taxable year of the employer in which the plan was adopted by such employer.

(b) *Disqualifying provisions.* For purposes of this section, with respect to a plan described in paragraph (a) of this section, the term “disqualifying provision” means:

(1) A provision of a new plan, the absence of a provision from a new plan, or an amendment to an existing plan, which causes such plan to fail to satisfy the requirements of the Code applicable to qualification of such plan as of the date such plan or amendment is first made effective.

(2) A plan provision which results in the failure of the plan to satisfy the qualification requirements of the Code by reason of a change in such requirements—

(i) Effected by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-406, 88 Stat. 829), hereafter referred to as “ERISA,” or the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97-248, 96 Stat. 324), hereafter referred to as “TEFRA,” or

(ii) Effective before the first day of the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1989 and that is effected by the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (Pub. L. 99-514, 100 Stat. 2085, 2489), hereafter referred to as “TRA ’86,” the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986, (Pub. L. 99-509, 100 Stat. 1874), hereafter referred to as “OBRA ’86,” or the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987 (Pub. L. 100-203, 101 Stat. 1330), hereafter referred to as “OBRA ’87.” For purposes of this paragraph (b)(2)(ii), a disqualifying provision includes any plan provision that is integral to a